Climate Change and Human Health Literature Portal

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Strange changes': Indigenous perspectives of climate change and adaptation in NE Arnhem Land (Australia)

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Abstract:

Despite growing global attention to the development of strategies and policy for climate change adaptation, there has been little allowance for input from Indigenous people. In this study we aimed to improve understanding of factors important in integration of Yolngu perspectives in planning adaptation policy in North East Arnhem Land (Australia). We conducted workshops and in-depth interviews in two 'communities' to develop insight into Yolngu peoples' observations and perspectives on climate change, and their ideas and preferences for adaptation. All participants reported observing changes in their ecological landscape, which they attributed to mining, tourism 'development', and climate change. 'Strange changes' noticed particularly in the last five years, had caused concern and anxiety among many participants. Despite their concern about ecological changes, participants were primarily worried about other issues affecting their community's general welfare. The results suggest that strategies and policies are needed to strengthen adaptive capacity of communities to mitigate over-arching poverty and wellbeing issues, as well as respond to changes in climate. Participants believed that major constraints to strengthening adaptive capacity had external origins, at regional, state and federal levels. Examples are poor communication and engagement, top-down institutional processes that allow little Indigenous voice, and lack of recognition of Indigenous culture and practices. Participants' preferences for strategies to strengthen community adaptive capacity tended to be those that lead towards greater self-sufficiency, independence, empowerment, resilience and close contact with the natural environment. Based on the results, we developed a simple model to highlight main determinants of community vulnerability. A second model highlights components important in facilitating discourse on enhancing community capacity to adapt to climatic and other stressors. (C) 2010 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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Resource Description

Communication: ☒

resource focus on research or methods on how to communicate or frame issues on climate change; surveys of attitudes, knowledge, beliefs about climate change

 A focus of content

Communication Audience: ☒

audience to whom the resource is directed

Health Professional, Policymaker, Researcher

Exposure : ☒

weather or climate related pathway by which climate change affects health

Unspecified Exposure

Geographic Feature: ☒

resource focuses on specific type of geography

Rural

Geographic Location: ☒

resource focuses on specific location

Non-United States

Non-United States: Australasia

Health Impact: ☒

specification of health effect or disease related to climate change exposure

Health Outcome Unspecified

Medical Community Engagement: ☒

resource focus on how the medical community discusses or acts to address health impacts of climate change

A focus of content

Mitigation/Adaptation: ☒

mitigation or adaptation strategy is a focus of resource

Adaptation

Population of Concern: A focus of content

Population of Concern: ☒

populations at particular risk or vulnerability to climate change impacts

Racial/Ethnic Subgroup

Other Racial/Ethnic Subgroup: Yolngu Australian

Resource Type: ☒

format or standard characteristic of resource

Research Article, Research Article

Resilience: ☒

capacity of an individual, community, or institution to dynamically and effectively respond or adapt to shifting climate impact circumstances while continuing to function

A focus of content

Timescale: ☒

time period studied

Time Scale Unspecified

Vulnerability/Impact Assessment: ☒

resource focus on process of identifying, quantifying, and prioritizing vulnerabilities in a system

A focus of content